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## **Cherished, Controversial, Obsolete, Revived : A Popular Swiss Cartoon Figure through the Decades**

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# CHERISHED, CONTROVERSIAL, OBSOLETE, REVIVED

## A Popular Swiss Cartoon Figure through the Decades<sup>1</sup>

Ingrid Tomkowiak

He is well over eighty years by now, but still alive and kicking: Globi. The blue parrot with his yellow beak, red-black chequered trousers and black beret is almost exclusively known to a Swiss audience, although he has been at the centre of numerous advertising campaigns and the eponymous hero of countless picture stories. With a rich history in merchandising and the media, he has even founded his own city in the World Wide Web, Globi-City, and can be encountered on facebook, too.

When the first picture story of Globi was published in a Swiss German newspaper on 24 August 1932, asking the child readers to follow this bird with the chequered trousers, the response was enthusiastic. Globi soon became a children's fiction hero and, to many generations, has been a trusted friend who takes them seriously. He has inspired his child readers to become creative themselves, and they in turn have kept him alive with

their sympathies, their ideas and activities. However, the parrot has also always been controversial in the course of his versatile and varied career. During those eighty years of his existence, his history is also closely connected to the history of Switzerland, from the economically difficult 1930s to the present.

### **F**rom Advertising Character to Children's Fiction Protagonist

Initially, Globi used to be an advertising character. The economic crisis of the 1930s demanded innovative strategies in order to lure customers into the shops. Hence, in 1931 the German department store chain Globus established a public relations department for this purpose, headed by Ignatius Karl Schiele as public relations manager. His motto was: "Let's make even better advertisements!" and his maxims in pursuing this goal were consistency, presence, repetition, originality,

and unity (see *Globus-Hauszeitung* ["Globus Company Newspaper"] 1932/1, 18).

When Globus celebrated its 25th anniversary, a huge children's party was supposed to pave the way into the department store for the future clientele. Schiele therefore developed the idea of an advertisement character that would especially appeal to children and thus bind them to the store from an early age on. Chief executive Joseph Zimmermann wrote retrospectively:

Those who possess the young generation also possess the future [...]. Our youth meeting certainly could not intend to lure the sparse pocket money from the little ones' pockets. The efforts undertaken for this purpose would not have been profitable enough [...]. Yet to win those sympathies means to acquire assets, which will bear secure interest in the future. (*Globus-Hauszeitung* 1932/10, 335–338)

The advertising character was supposed to invite children to visit the children's party where it was to perform as an entertainer and, finally, it was supposed to also help in selling the products of Globus. Thus, Schiele and Robert Lips, an illustrator and prospective architect, collaborated in the development of Globi, a hybrid creature between human and parrot.

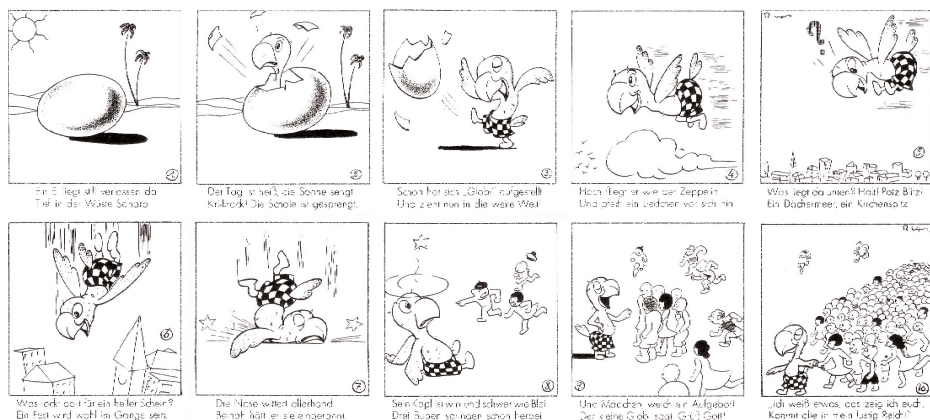
Robert Lips later elaborated on the potential of Globi's character concerning its graphic aspect in the *Globus Company Newspaper*:

Globi is basically a grotesque token of the entire scope of human expression. This figure, depicted in a basic line drawing, is able to portray all characteristic features of human expressions. This allowed for a variety of expressions with a minimal change in the drawn lines and these expressions could be enhanced in concordance with dress and body movement. Any sentiment and any thought can be visualised through the character of Globi. (*Globus-Hauszeitung* 1942/5, 137)

For the 1932 anniversary, the department store Globus thus invited all children to a "youth meeting" in its branches in Chur, Bern, Aarau, Zurich and Basel with a picture story (see ill. 1). According to the company management,

all rooms – from the ground floor to the attic – all shop windows, all events inside and outside the building, all advertisements and prints were to be dedicated to the child!" (20 Jahre Globi, 2)

Accordingly, the feast included shooting galleries, high strikers, pottery painting, a puppet theatre, trails, drawing competitions, a stamp exchange, a yoyo championship and



Ill. 1: First picture story of Globi from August 24th 1932 (Ill.: Robert Lips)

© Globi Publishing House, Zürich.

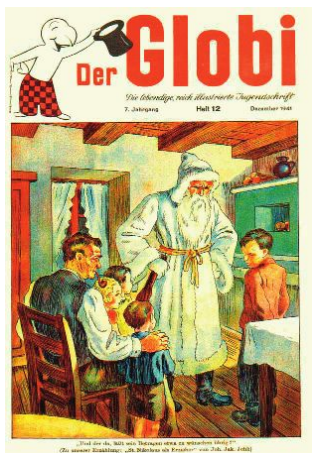
many more activities. The Globus Company Newspaper reported:

Young people advanced in droves, lively and spirited. Everybody wanted to join in, everybody wanted to see the legendary bird Globi; him who had been hatched under the blazing sun of the Sahara, had flown towards Limmat-Athens in order to attend the inaugural festivities in person. [...]. A broad ribbon around the building announced to the city that Globus invited the young generation [...]. (*Globus-Hauszeitung* 1932/10, 343)

As early as at this first youth meeting, the participants were prompted to be creatively involved. They could proudly take home the results of their various creative activities. The highlight of the meeting, however, was a live Globi with an enormous head and

chequered trousers. He himself had created this children's paradise, or so they said. He participated animatedly in the children's activities, entertained them with pranks and anticipated their every wish. Globi also strolled through the towns with the children and paid an inaugural visit to the editorial offices of local newspapers. This fact alone paid off, since the reports about the creative programme of the youth days in the department store turned out to be favourable without exception. *Basler Vorwärts*, for instance, contended that “actually such initiatives should not only be taken in a warehouse for a fortnight, but they rather ought to be a regular programme at school” (quoted in *Globus-Hauszeitung* 1932/10, 353).

In a time when children were not offered many incentives, it is hardly



Ill. 2: Globi-Newspaper, December 1941  
© Globi Publishing House, Zürich.

surprising that they asked for further celebrations of this sort, and that more and more children wanted to know more about this strange bird. For weeks, public relations manager Schiele received letters to Globi from children, and he knew immediately how to make clever use of this beginning friendship. “When I still received those letters after the period of three months”, he said, “it became clear that Globi already represented a certain attitude, which made me campaign for the conscious development of his character” (*Globus-Hauszeitung* 1942/5, 134). Accordingly, Globus arranged further spectacular public appearances of Globi and organised two more youth meetings. On the occasions of the meetings in 1933 and 1934

respective memorial publications, *Der Globi* (The Globi), were released in each year, and the Zurich daily newspaper inserted a special page called “Globi’s Kinderzeitung” (Globi’s Children’s Newspaper) with a call for papers for its child readers.

However, the turbulences of the children’s parties in the department store Globus became too much to handle for the management, which resulted in the cancellation of further youth meetings. Instead, the monthly journal *Der Globi*; or *Globi-Zeitung* (Globi-Newspaper) was published from January 1935 until 1970. The children had been successful with their numerous letters and continuous pleas to regularly publish “Globi’s Kinderzeitung”, “their friend Globi” explains in the first issue. The journal predominantly contained stories, crafting and play manuals, and most notably the illustrated adventures of Globi. Added to this were competitions as well as the letterbox of the Globi editorial team. The Globi-Newspaper now enabled Schiele and his editorial team to keep in close touch with their readership. In 1952, the editorial team retrospectively assessed this development:

The publication of the journal [...] marked a decisive turning point for Globi’s future: the advertising

character for the Globus department store was given a spiritual foundation, was refined and expanded to become a general literary character. (*20 Jahre Globi*, 7)

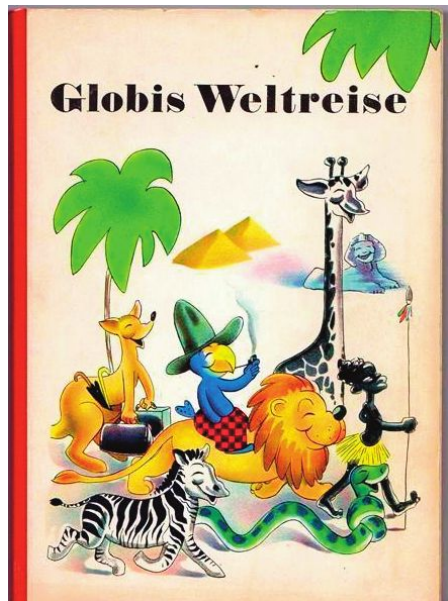
At the children's request, Schiele printed the first Globi-book in 1935, *Globi's Weltreise* (Globi's Journey around the World) in 8000 copies, which has been succeeded by a new volume each year to this day. PR manager Schiele repeatedly claimed the position of Globi's creator and spiritual father; he generally developed the ideas to the books, the frame, the stories, plots and contents, and at times would even write the script for a screen adaptation.

According to a verbatim report of Schiele, Robert Lips strove to "find as many funny and inventive ideas for his illustrations as possible, and conclude with a strikingly humorous punchline". The 'poet' Alfred Bruggmann then was supposed to impart a "positive, moral and instructional message" in his "formulation of the verses" (undated notes of Schiele, Archive Beat Frischknecht).

Schiele assumed responsibility for the characteristics and peculiarities of Globi, whom he imagined as a "cheerful fellow with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, an inventive and cunning rogue and jester. Many a time he is as

bold as brass, then again tender-hearted and of a touchingly profound sentiment. Like a proper lad: adventurous." (*Globi Junior*, preface) Nevertheless, Schiele also formulated strict didactic intentions:

Globi's existence and fortunes are supposed to demonstrate that even the younger generation should not do anything they want. Exaggerations, wild outbursts, an insincere attitude, a malicious will or unjust actions will evidently lead to reproof or punishment; however, not with ineffective or schoolmasterly indoctrination, but rather with wit and humour. (*Globi's Siege und Niederlagen* [Globi's Triumphs and Defeats], preface)



Ill. 3: The first Globi-book, 1935  
© Globi Publishing House, Zürich



The illustrator's drafts were often criticised by Schiele, who interfered with individual details or recommended appropriate readings, for instance Jeremias Gotthelf's *Bauernspiegel* (Peasant Chronicles) for the book *Wie Globi Bauer wurde* (How Globi Became a Farmer, 1941) or James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* for *Globi bei den Indianern* (Globi with the Indians, 1952).

On 21 September 1944, Globi was outsourced from the advertising department of Globus and integrated into a separate publishing house, Globi Verlag. In 1997, the Globus department store chain was dissolved and its individual units were transferred to the Migros retail company. The Globi publishing house was then reorganised in 2007, sold to the Orell Füssli publishing house, and subsequently continued as an imprint.

## **Brand, Community, Creativity, and Interaction**

Once established, Globi could be marketed further. In doing so, Globus pursued the same marketing strategy as Disney in the United States. As early as the 1930s, Globus sold various merchandise items featuring a picture of Globi. The clientele was presented with a wide array of merchandise products, ranging from toys and

chocolate to razor blades and toy buckets. Thus, Globi became a classic of Swiss brand names. Brands instil trust and offer the consumer guidelines in an ever-changing environment by vouching for a symbol of a consistent, top quality product. Albert Bosshardt, central buying agent at Globus, acknowledges in 1942: "Each individual Globi merchandise item presupposes top quality products, which have a price advantage and are marketable. Children are strict critics" (*Globus-Hauszeitung* 1942/5, 167).

Globi's effect was community-building. In 1936, the Globi-club movement emerged from the circle of the Globi readers. Boys and girls united in groups, resulting in about 700 fan clubs by 1952, with more than 9000 members, the so-called 'Globians'. The Globi editorial team welcomed each individual member and seized the chance to promote the subscription of the Globi-Newspaper. The paper, in turn, formulated the principles for club members: it became the duty of 'Globians' to foster a sense of companionship, engage in reasonable leisure activities and commit good deeds. In 1937, the editor of the *Globi-Zeitung* wrote: "The Globi-club movement intends to foster and unfold the positive energy that slumbers in every young person. It prompts adolescents

to assign themselves new tasks they will gladly fulfil on their own initiative." (*Globus-Hauszeitung* 1937/4, 63) And this is exactly what those clubs did as they organised various events and charities with considerable efforts and great ingenuity. In 1941, the editorial team published the 'Globian anthem' in their newspaper, which was also pressed on vinyl records. The text (in Swiss vernacular) asserts:

Switzerland has skyscraping mountains / there is the Speer, the Hörnli and the Albishorn. / But for boys and girls there is even more to offer / we have Globi, our friend from Zurich Lake.

We are Swiss children and Globians / our hearts are filled with faith, love and zeal. / We are comrades you do not find every day. / We love our native country and our friend Globi, too.

Whenever Globi made a public appearance, he was celebrated enthusiastically. Massive crowds assembled to watch Globi in a horse carriage at the Zurich spring festival "Sechse-läuten" in 1946, his appearances at the Zurich air show in the same year, at the airshows at the Zurich Allemend and in Dübendorf in 1948, at the carnival train in 1949 and his water-ski ride on Lake Zurich in 1951.

In the Globi-Newspaper, the Globians reported on their campaigns for Globi and their club activities. Individual fans reported on their charitable work, including the former federal president of Switzerland, Kaspar Vil-liger: "Dear Globi! I also included 15 Swiss franc. Please distribute them amongst the poor. I earned them myself. Yours, Kaspar." (*Globi-Zeitung* 1952/7, 140).

The creative offers of the Globi newspaper predominantly consisted of competitions (see Lehninger, 37–72), in which thousands of children took part. A wide array of topics was addressed. Children drew and wrote stories, poems and theatre plays, which they then rehearsed and performed. The editorial team covered those initiatives with approval and praise.

## World War II

In 1938, Philipp Etter, cultural attaché of the Federal Council of Switzerland, announced the idea of a 'spiritual defence of the home country' in light of the national-socialist, respectively fascist ideologies in the neighbouring countries Germany and Italy. Its goal was a native and patriotic self-reflection and intellectual distinction from fascist ideas. At the outbreak of the



War in September 1939, all Swiss institutions were ordered to offer their services to their home country. Schiele gladly heeded this order and thus, Globi was enlisted, too.

Accordingly, the Globi-books turned towards national topics. In 1939, the volume “Globi at the National Exhibition” [„Globi an der Landesausstellung“] addressed the Swiss national exhibition held in Zürich in 1939, often referred to as ‘Landi’ and considered to be a pronounced manifestation of the spiritual defence. The topics for the picture stories corresponded with the exhibition programme, with the ability to defend oneself being particularly dear to the heart of the Globi editorial team. *Globi wird Soldat* (Globi Enlists, 1940), “the first humorous soldier book for Swiss adolescents”, shows enlistment and drill, field exercise and the merry military life off duty. The picture story *Wie Globi Bauer wurde* (How Globi Became a Farmer, 1941) humorously treats experiences about the battle for cultivation and food rationing.

The Globi-Newspaper, too, was to contribute to and increase the self-esteem of the Swiss. Besides providing entertainment, the newspaper also spread patriotic ideas among their young readership between 1938 and 1945. It organised essay and drawing

competitions (see Lehninger, 37–72), for instance on the national exhibition 1939, Swiss history, distinguished Swiss celebrities or Swiss customs and practices. After the outbreak of the war in 1939, a competition on the topic of ‘mobilisation’ was advertised. On the one hand, the submitted drawings testify to a creative appropriation of Globi, on the other hand they illustrate how children had to cope with the daily routines of the war period. Even if Switzerland was not an active scene of the war, these routines were experienced as fathers were drafted, food rationed, crops cultivated on formerly unused fields, additional hands were needed in agriculture, recyclables were collected and blackouts became necessary.

From 1940 onwards, the Globi-Newspaper was fully determined by the war. It reported of billeting, military life, the work of the women, as well as of charitable gifts from children to soldiers. Moreover, general Guisan’s appeal to the Swiss youth to help out in agriculture during the so-called battle for cultivation was printed in the Globi newspaper. The Globi editorial department – by then in uniform – commented as follows:

Don’t you find it enormous that the Swiss youth is urgently called upon by the army’s commander-in-chief to do work otherwise

intended for men? The general relies on you to be ready to make sacrifices for your native country just as a soldier would. [...] Globians, school children! You are the future of our nation! Only a generation that makes sacrifices will be able to defend their fathers' legacy! (*Globi-Zeitung* 1940/5, 78)

The newspaper printed stories suited to accompany those appeals. Besides, aid programmes were of national importance. Hundreds of Globi readers took part in the gleaning-competition of the national cultivation funds. Globi-clubs reported about successful collections of waste material and their commitment at a weekly donation campaign of the Red Cross. The readers visualised those campaigns in their artwork, but they also told Globi about their fear that Switzerland could forfeit its freedom and independence. A correspondent received the following encouraging answer from the Globi editorial team:

But do not indulge in pessimistic thought; instead exhibit a strong will and say stubbornly: "I am and will remain a Swiss lad!" This is the spiritual defence, to which each boy and each girl, but especially each Globian should contribute. (quoted in Aeckerli-Rehnlund 117)

*The Weapons Are at Rest!* was a special edition of the Globi-Newspaper on the occasion of the armistice in 1945. "We Swiss are extremely grateful" is one of the lines. Grateful, that is, for the general Guisan, but also for the soldiers, mothers, children and amongst all for "God Almighty, that he spared Switzerland from this horrid war." General Guisan wrote in the preface:

The post-war period makes high demands on the young generation in particular. The military dangers for our nation are past for now. [...] However, certain other dangers are already beginning to loom: defeatism, indifference and egoism. [...] Therefore, the best way to serve your native country is to constantly think and act like a Swiss. [...] Believe in the powers which reside within you and which make our country strong. (*The Weapons are at Rest!*, preface)

This quotation already hints at the long duration of this so-called "Geistige Landesverteidigung" (spiritual defence) in Switzerland, well beyond the end of the war.

## Mouthpiece of the Youth"

Over the years, thousands of letters from Switzerland and abroad, often embellished with drawings, reached the editorial team of the Globi-Newspaper.

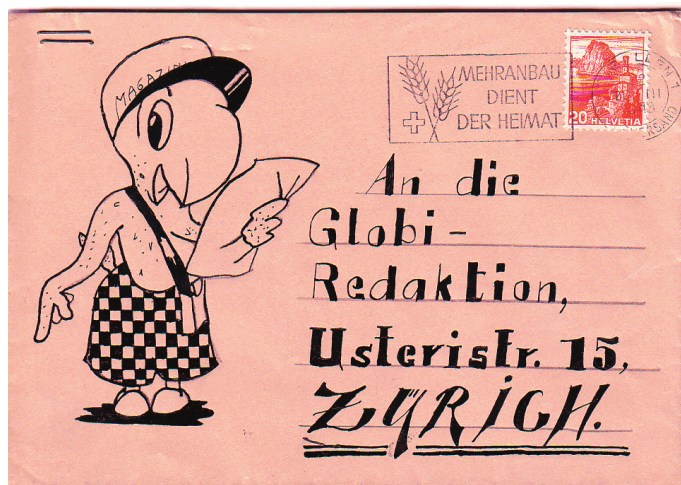
An important reason for the enthusiasm and creative activities of the child readers is the unusual attention and appreciation the editorial team paid to those contributions. Accordingly, editor Emil Bannwart contended that the agenda of the Globi-Newspaper was “to take the child and its concerns seriously, to examine the children’s world in their language without being childish” (Globi-Newspaper 1938/12, 192). Head of public relations Schiele wanted to make the newspaper a ‘mouthpiece for the young generation’ in order to demonstrate “which creative forces are hidden in our youth” (Globi-Newspaper 1938/12, 192).

Many letters reveal Globi’s significance as a confidant for the children. One girl wrote the following lines to him:

I only have one single good friend, and that is you, dear Globi. You understand me, because you can read the hearts of children. I trust you and that is why I want to share my worries with you. I am always mocked at school because my clothes are not as pretty as those of the other children. They also blame me for having such an old mother. This is not true – she just looks like that because she is sad all the time. I don’t have a father who could defend me. At school I always pretend that I don’t hear anything, but in the evening I cry bitterly. Please reply to me as soon as possible, dear Globi. I am always so happy whenever I receive a letter from you. (20 Jahre Globi, 26)

The editorial team always encouraged children to submit their craftwork, their drawings and poems even

when no competitions were running. Photographs of a large amount of these submissions were printed at least in the first issues of the paper. To see their own work reproduced in the Globi-Newspaper meant a lot to those children:



Ill. 4: One of many letters to Globi, 1942. Archive Beat Frischknecht

With utmost delight did I spot my drawing of Globi in the following issue. The praise of the editorial team and the fact that all Globians were able to see it was simply incredible", a girl wrote; and she continued: "[T]he Globi editorial team was virtually overwhelmed with my little drawings". (*Globi-Zeitung* 1942/5, 150)

Each submission, every single letter, was acknowledged and responded to individually. The editors put great emphasis on how carefully the children's works had been drafted; again and again they commented on the style. If children, in their opinion, had not put sufficient effort into their work, editors remarked on that, too, in their response letters. Particularly well-executed pieces of handicraft or drawings were rewarded with a so-called honorary announcement and were recorded in the 'golden book of honorary announcements'. After twenty years, hundreds of thousands of submissions are said to have reached the editorial team.

All those works have been collected. Pieces of handicraft were exhibited in glass cabinets, drawings were collected in 'artists' albums', which are still kept in the archives of the Globi publishing house. The editorial team always welcomed guests

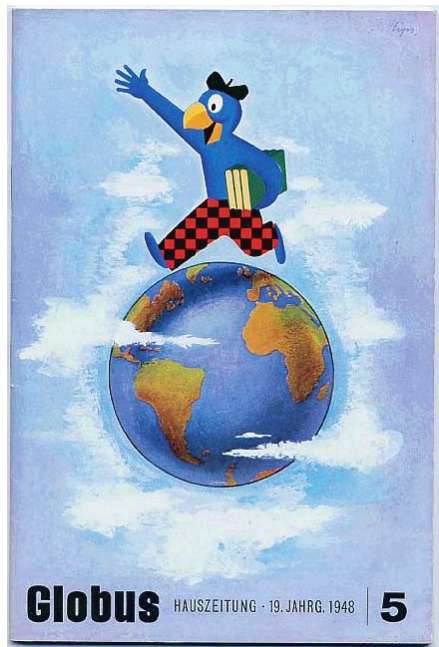
and allowed children to marvel at the artists' albums with the submitted drawings in the Globi-Parlour that had been created particularly for that purpose. According to the Globi editorial team, about 39,000 children had taken that opportunity by 1948.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary, the Globi-Newspaper organised Olympic Games in five stages – not an Olympiad of the strongest and quickest, but one of the mind, of knowledge and creativity. At these Olympic Games, comprehensive knowledge, a sense of originality, elaborate skills in drawing and handicraft work, meticulous work as well as diligence and endurance were of decisive importance. The Globi-Newspaper reported:

5,881 boys and girls had submitted a total of 16,673 works. 9,246 solutions to riddles and competitions, 5,032 drawings and coloured devotional images, 847 essays, 773 poems, 698 pieces of handicraft, 43 theatre plays, 19 riddle suggestions and 15 specifically composed Globi songs. Such an enormous response, participation and enthusiastic commitment beat all expectations. It is true after all: the more we demand of you Globians, the more you achieve. (*Globi-Zeitung* 1952/12, 228)

## Other Countries, Other Media

In the post-war years, the publishing house tried to establish Globi on the international market, especially in the United States. As a consequence, individual comic strips were published in American youth magazines and Globi books appeared in several European countries. In 1948, Schiele wrote in the Globus Company Newspaper: "The name Globi also represents world solidarity, universality, globalization, exceeding narrow boundaries into distant spheres and beyond, to all the rest of them" (quoted in Bellwald 143).



Ill. 5: Globus Company Newspaper, 5/1948.  
Archive Beat Frischknecht

Although Lips and Schiele already dreamed of Globi participating in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York and Lips had even made first drafts of this event (see the Globi-Verlag archive), Globi had little chance to succeed on the American comic book market. Schiele summarised the verdict of an American expert in his travel notes on his visit to the United States:

Everything should be more drastic, coarser, more primitive and thus clearer and more distinct. Globi is hardly a sportive daredevil; he must be less restrained. A revolver, a tomahawk, a scalping knife or similar bloody instruments would greatly enhance his popularity among U.S. American youth. Besides, Globi should tussle more with others, he must strike severely, beat up the rest and naturally emerge triumphant in the end. (Archive Beat Frischknecht)

In the end, those attempts were unsuccessful and Globi's sphere of influence remained restricted to German-speaking Switzerland. Yet Globi still was not only to assert himself internationally, but also to gain attractiveness in different media. A first step along this way was the afore-mentioned recording of the Globian anthem. There had already been first attempts to depict



Globi in motion. In 1949, Julius Pinschewer, a pioneer in advertising and animated film, created the film *Globi's gutes Herz* (Globi's Good Heart). The film was presented at the 11th Film Festival at the Venice Biennale in the summer of 1950; yet the private screening for the Globus management met with little enthusiasm. Only in 1985, it was aired by Swiss television on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Globi-books.

In the light of the debate about the introduction of television in Switzerland, the magazines of the Globus company produced trial television programmes in collaboration with the ETH Zurich in the 1950s. By these means, tens of thousands were able to experience television for the first time. The creators of Globi, Schiele and Lips, participated in those attempts, together with their famous creation.



Ill. 6: Globi on TV. Archive Beat Frischknecht

## **A Braggart in the Shape of a Bird” – Criticizing Globi**

Despite all of Schiele's educational ambitions, the Globi figure was highly controversial, as it was frequently accused of being merely pulp fiction. Especially the Swiss teachers' association was rather hostile towards Globi from the very beginning. Yet it was precisely this institution from which Schiele had hoped to earn recognition. A letter from the committee for youth literature of the Swiss teachers' association addressed to Schiele declares that the “aesthetic momentum [is] not preserved in those flamboyantly colourful book covers” (Archive Beat Frischknecht). Although the ideology mediated in the Globi books met with approval, “unfortunately we have to observe that the youth is taken far too seriously” (Archive Beat Frischknecht).

In 1954, journalist Walter Widmer criticised the connection between educational impetus and commercial character in an article in the *National Zeitung Basel* in 1954, entitled “The Chime of Childlike Innocence: Thoughts on Young Adults' Reading Matter”. He prophesied dire consequences for indulging in the Globi books:

Some bird-shaped braggart is warmly praised and conducts a roaring trade. His loud-mouthed,



hackneyed, flimsy bravery is likely to have more devastating repercussions than the complete works of the notorious Karl May. (Widmer)

The pieces of handicraft created by the Globi devotees were a particular nuisance to the teachers' association. In a correspondence with Schiele from 1943, those pieces are dismissed as "veritable homely junk" that were all too often hailed as masterpieces instead of being scrutinised more critically (Archive Beat Frischknecht). Later on, Schiele described the motivation for this constant rejection as "the envy of teachers who would be writers themselves, but lacked humour as well as a sense for light-hearted folklore culture" (Archive Beat Frischknecht).

1970 saw the last publication of the Globi Newspaper. The 1970s were very uncomfortable years for the Globi publishing house. Publishing director Schiele retired and Robert Lips's deteriorating health no longer allowed him to continuously provide the publisher with drawings. For about a decade, the publishing house tried to keep afloat with reprints and anthologies. Moreover, the protests of 1968 had stirred up the country, affecting children's and youth culture as well. Globi clubs and the Globi-Newspaper no longer corresponded with the spirit of the time.

Instead, the ideology behind Globi was now subjected to a comprehensive criticism: Globi was accused of racism, sexism and violence, of narrow-mindedness and banality. In 1971, the author Gerold Späth argued in Swiss television that Globi, the 'Super-Swiss', was racist and prejudiced children accordingly. In the same programme, child psychiatrist Ursula Müller analysed Globi as an epitome of whiteness, an overpowering male figure, who can do anything and can cope with any situation – a natural-born winner. In addition, Regula Renschler, member of the human rights organisation "Declaration of Bern" ["Erklärung von Bern"] argued in 1981 that many Globi books "verbally and visually represent people of different races in an exceedingly offensive and racist fashion" (214). Again and again,

Africans are depicted in cliché-ridden and stereotypical drawings. They are wearing raffia or banana-leaf skirts, braces around their necks, fingers and ankles, have chubby lips and round pupils rolling in their white eyes. (ibid.)

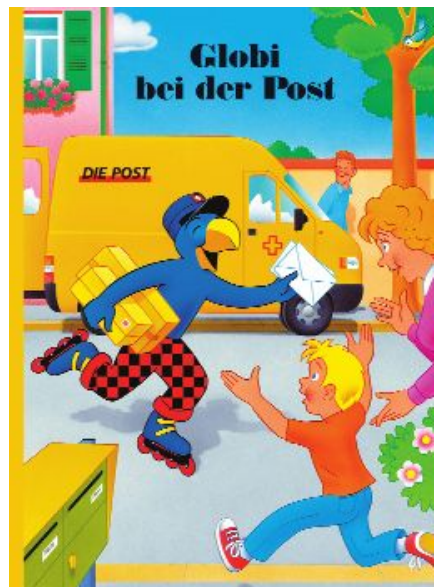
The inhabitants of Africa would also be labelled with discriminatory terms such as "negroes [...], cannibals, Moors, savages or Hottentots" (ibid. 216): "All in all, the world of Globi is a

paternalistic, chauvinistic, racist, sexist and quite violent world" (ibid. 231). This type of criticism has continued, and it has been resumed in recent discussions of racism and discrimination in children's and young adult literature in the light of postcolonial studies (cf. Purtschert/Krüger 70–85). It has also been applied to more recent productions, such as *Globi bei den Nashörnern* (Globi and the Rhinoceroses, 2007), where Africa is depicted as dependent on the help of the clever and inventive Swiss Globi but no overt racism is shown (cf. Purtschert). In one of the latest books, *Globi, der schlaue Bauer* (2014), also published in English as *Globi, the Smart Farmer*, Globi transfers an African eco-farming project to Switzerland.

## Breaking Ground

In those difficult years of the 1970s, exploring new media was an attempt to keep up with developments. In 1976, radio journalist and director Karen Meffert produced the first radio play with Globi, *Globi's Abenteuer* (Globi's Adventures). Swiss actor Walter Andreas Müller developed Globi's characteristic voice, which became Globi's acoustic alter ego. Since then, countless radio plays have been produced in cooperation with the Swiss record label Phonag AG.

The era of the 'founding fathers' was past. In the 1980s, the winds of change were blowing through the Globi publishing house. A new illustrator was found in Peter Heinzer, and some time later, Heiri Schmid also became part of the graphic Globi team. In the new books, Globi is interested in current topics, such as the preservation of the environment and animal welfare, but he also visits the fire brigade or the post office. Globi was tamed, polished and became a role model. Globi books like *Globi bei der Feuerwehr* (Globi at the Fire Brigade, 1985), *Globi bei der Rettungsflugwacht* (Globi at the Air Rescue Service, 1988) or *Globi und die Bahn* (Globi and the



Ill. 7: Globi as postman, 1997  
© Globi Publishing House, Zürich

Railway, 2001) are highly informative. *Globi bei der Post* (Globi at the Post Office, 1997) turned out to be particularly successful and was even used by teachers as material for social studies classes.

Just like at the beginning of his career, Globi also directed his attention towards home topics, and Switzerland gains in importance as a topic. Accordingly, Globi went on a journey through Switzerland (*Globi's abenteuerliche Schweizer Reise*, 1984), experienced adventures in the past (*Globi und Wilhelm Tell*, 1991) and journeyed through the Swiss national park (*Globi im Nationalpark*, 1993).

In the mid-1990s, the publishing house increased its collaboration with Swiss companies and institutions. In 1996, Swiss Mail issued a special Globi stamp; shortly afterwards two Globi post office vans were put into service. In 1984, the Globi publishing house had already published *Globi's abenteuerliche Schweizer Reise* (Globi's Adventurous Swiss Journey) in collaboration with Swiss Federal Railway. Now Swiss Federal Railway had three double-decker express coaches built, featuring Globi playgrounds. Tour operator Hotelplan integrated Globi-clubs into its 'Horizonte' hotel chain in Europe and Tunisia. In 1998, the holiday apartments 'Utoring' opened a

Globi-Hotel along with a children's castle in Grison Disentis. In 2003, the Globi publishing house decided to tighten its collaborative bonds: under the label "Planet Globi" all touristic enterprises related to Globi were united. This network includes the holiday region Lenzerheide-Valbella with its Globi trail, the Globi Winter Wonderland in Brunni-Engelberg, with its hotel 'Edelweiss' and Globi-club. Quite recently, a network of Globi day nurseries was established in Eastern Switzerland.

Time and again, new grounds are being explored in the field of media, too. CD-ROMs and DVD-games have been produced, and the range of publications was diversified through various factual, hobby and language books with their respective merchandise. Furthermore, the much-anticipated, internationally produced animated film *Globi* was released in cinemas in 2003, although the Globi publishing house was only involved in part of the production and not until the end. Once again the actor Walter Andreas Müller lent his voice to Globi. However, the film was not well received by either critics nor the audience. Apparently, fusing the customary Globi style with manga aesthetics has turned out to be too unusual a combination. On the occasion of the

premiere, the *Sonn-  
tagsZeitung* wondered  
whether “the Swiss  
People’s Party bring an  
action against the sell-  
out of native values”  
(28 September 2003,  
64). The most recent  
large-scale media proj-  
ect in the Globi uni-



Ill. 8: GlobiCity. Screenshot

verse is the virtual borough GlobiCity ([www.globi-city.com](http://www.globi-city.com)), a fee-based games platform for children on the web.

In recent years, particular Swiss topics have once more been promoted by the Globi publishing house with titles such as *Globis grosses Buch der Schweizer Sagen* (Globi’s Big Book of Swiss Legends, 2008), *Globis Buch vom Schweizer Brauchtum* (Globi’s Book of Swiss Customs, 2011) or *Globis Reise ins Herz der Schweiz* (Globi’s Journey into the Heart of Switzerland, 2012). Informative topics continue being popular, as is apparent from volumes such as *Globi beim Roten Kreuz* (Globi at the Red Cross, 2005), *Globi am Flughafen* (Globi at the Airport, 2010) or *Globi in der Schule* (Globi at School, 2011).

## Globi, the last Swiss?

The blue bird with his chequered trousers seems to challenge debates about national identity as each Swiss

in German-speaking Switzerland harbours his or her own individual childhood memories about him.

Globi’s Swiss character became the focus of the press reception after the opening of the Winterthur exhibition in 2003. “Switzerland reflects upon its second most important son” (17 August 2003, 67), the Sunday Newspaper of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* wrote. The *Appenzeller Zeitung* saw Globi as a “Helvetian Papageno” (30 August 2003, 36), the *Tages-Anzeiger* as a “Swiss national hero” (30 August 2003, 15), the *Züri Tipp* as a “merry anarchic Swiss” (28 August 2003, 51) and the leftist *WOZ* even as “the last Swiss” (4 September 2003, 19). Being thus ranked among Wilhelm Tell and other Swiss national heroes, Globi can safely be considered to have been stylised into a myth.

Globi’s success and the creation of his myth rest on several pillars.

Certainly the child recipients are the first ones to be mentioned. From the very beginning, they have responded to Globus warehouse's interactive offers with enthusiasm and appropriated them creatively. In a time of little alternative stimulation, the Globi figure appeared to children like a real person full of empathy and worthy of trust. This was not least due to the editorial team who had established and maintained personal contact to the children. Even if many Globi stories and their educational goals may appear rather dreary and dated today, Globi as a phenomenon was part of an educational approach that accommodated the needs of children much more than the educational style they were familiar with at home or at school and thus also released their creative potential. On Globi's 60th birthday, Adolf Muschg argued that Globi represented an "authorised freedom" to the children: not only because of his stories, in which he occasionally exhibited anarchic features, but also due to the encouragement of autonomous activities and a sense of community for the children on the part of the editorial team.

Long before the join-in activities of the 1970s, the interaction between editorial department and child audience displayed a remarkably advanced

educational impetus. Within the first three decades of the twentieth century, representatives of the pedagogical reform movement had developed the foundations for the principles and methods which Schiele and his editorial team promoted (cf. Wilkending; Helbling). Central among these principles were the young people's "self-directed learning" and their "productivity". One of the protagonists of the movement, Fritz Gansberg, suggested: "We desire children to be in constant motion, to work, draw, rhyme, research, try out, recite, or do whatever they are inclined to" (quoted in Wilkending 30). Poetry should be child-oriented, children's evaluation of children's literature ought to be as much respected as their free, uncensored writing should be acknowledged as artistic production. The pedagogical reform movement also drew on the insights of experimental child psychology. And so did Schiele. "I decided to make the world of the child my own. Henceforward, not only did I systematically study the entire field of child psychology, I also sought personal contact with children of every age", he wrote in retrospect (1945, 2).

The continuous diversification and medialization of the character over decades has further enhanced the success.

Its medialization in particular has contributed to the perceived modernity of the figure, which is additionally supported by the co-operations with various commercial and tourism enterprises.

The exhibition around Globi's seventy-year-old history in 2003 encouraged a debate about the phenomenon Globi as a national icon. On the occasion of the exhibition, former and current Globi-enthusiasts and -opponents began to gauge the significance of the character for their own biography as well as for Swiss culture and mentality. At Globi's eightieth birthday in 2012, Swiss identity did not feature as prominently in the responses. In times dominated by economic concerns, the history of this long-lasting (especially commercial) success was foregrounded.

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## NOTES

<sup>i</sup> This article is a revised and extended version of Bellwald/Tomkowiak 2008. For a detailed history of Globi see Bellwald 2003; and *Globi und seine Zeit* 2003.

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